

**DEB PATTERSON
STATE SENATOR/SENADORA ESTATAL
DISTRICT/DISTRITO 10**



OREGON STATE SENATE/SENADO DEL ESTADO DE OREGON

February 22, 2022

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Knopp and Honorable Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Deb Patterson, State Senator from State District 10 and I am also a personal caregiver for a family member. I am here to add my support for SB 1556 with the -5 amendment.

Oregon is facing a significant shortage in home care workers – approximately 6000 across the state.

These are workers, 80% of whom are women, 40% of whom are people of color, who help people in their homes, in memory care facilities, in group homes and in assisted living, with the activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing, turning over in bed or moving into a wheelchair, and much more. These are entry level jobs, for which a background check is required, and for which training must be completed.

Record of a completed background check and any completed trainings are maintained at the facility or agency where the care worker is employed. SB 1556 would create a path to a certification through a work group made up of diverse stakeholders, and a public-facing registry which would serve as a type of transcript to show a care worker's name, county of residence, and information whether a background check is complete, and the trainings that have been completed. This information would remain in the database which would be a help to workers change jobs, and to employers seeking to hire. It would be searchable by name only for employers and consumers who want to ascertain whether a care worker's background check is current and what trainings they have completed. The care worker could opt out of participation, and there is no fee to the care worker, the consumer or the employer to use this database. The costs would be borne by the State, which are estimated, we have heard from ODHS, to be approximately \$240,000 for staffing over a biennium and \$75,000 for IT start-up. The cost for IT startup is not higher because there is already a similar database at ODHS for the traditional health care workers. In addition, the timeline for implementation has been extended.

I would like to take a moment as well to address the -5 amendment. This amendment will:

- Broaden the opt-out feature to give employees more flexibility with public facing information
- Extend the timeline for employers to submit information into the registry to 120 days
- Limit what information will be public to the employee's name, county/city and certification and background check status only
- Remove the permissive fee on employers
- Direct ODHS to continue to work to align certification requirements and,
- Reduce potential for confusion and burdens on employers in reporting

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The development of a certification for care workers is an important step in helping to create a career path to serve as an incentive to enter this work and develop one's professional skills as an entry level job in health and human services. Interested stakeholders have worked very hard to come to agreement on a path forward for this bill that meets the needs of all parties involved.

Overall, SB 1556 is an important step toward growing and professionalizing the home care work force, which includes some of our most hard-working and under-appreciated Oregonians who have been on the front lines of the covid-19 pandemic serving some of the most vulnerable among us – our elderly and disabled neighbors. Equally important, it puts in place some additional consumer protection in home care services.

I urge the committee to support SB 1556 and thank you for the time to speak to you today.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deb Patterson".

Senator Deb Patterson